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## Categories of Training Problems Being Faced by Hampton Roads Business and Industry Trainers

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**CATEGORIES OF TRAINING PROBLEMS BEING FACED BY  
HAMPTON ROADS BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY TRAINERS**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE  
FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL AND  
TECHNICAL STUDIES  
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY**

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**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE MASTERS OF SCIENCE**

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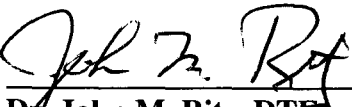
**BY  
DELBERT W. GIST**

**December 1999**

## SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was prepared by Delbert W. Gist under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree.

### APPROVED BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

According to the March 1999 Commonwealth of Virginia Labor Statistics, the Hampton Roads Area has 735,605 civilian workers with an impressive 2.9 percent unemployment rate. See Table I. As a result of such low unemployment, the industry and business communities' future will depend immensely on the ability of the human resource trainers to maintain a technically skilled and professional workforce.

Approximately one out of every four adults in the Commonwealth holds a college degree, and 80 percent of Virginia's high school graduates choose to continue their education (Your Virginia Business, 1998, p. 13.9). With an educated workforce in place, the industry and business trainers in Hampton Roads should experience great achievements in updating the employment knowledge base with new technology and human software skills.

During an employee orientation workshop at The Cendant Company in Norfolk, Virginia, Marita Rutledge, Interactive Trainer, was surprised when she tasked a prospective employee to read from a training handbook. "The young lady miss-pronounced several words on the first page of the training guide and after a scheduled break, she never returned to complete the program (telephone conversation, May 19, 1999). A follow-up by Rutledge found that the prospective employee recently graduated with a four-year college degree. Hank McKlasky, a contract vendor from San Diego, California, visits the Hampton Roads area often to educate Department of Defense civil employees on computer based training. McKlasky says that "trainers are reluctant to use CBT mainly due to older employees fears of



learning new technology and managers in key positions who are computer illiterate” (telephone conversation, May 14, 1999).

**TABLE 1**  
**LABOR MARKET INFORMATION**  
**HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA**

TIME PERIOD	LABOR FORCE	NUMBER EMPLOYED	NUMBER UNEMPLOYED	RATE (%)
MAR 99	<b>735,605</b>	<b>714,465</b>	<b>21,140</b>	<b>2.9</b>
FEB 99	<b>734,349</b>	<b>710,146</b>	<b>24,203</b>	<b>3.3</b>
MAR 98	<b>709,787</b>	<b>687,377</b>	<b>22,410</b>	<b>3.2</b>

**NOTE: Hampton Roads military population is estimated at 33% of the workforce.**

Virginia Employment Commission  
Economic Information Service

According to an interview with Don Hoock, Training and Development manager for the Norfolk, Virginia, based Market Connection company, “I constantly fight for training dollars and support from call center supervisors” (personal communication, May 18, 1999). Hoock explained in quite detail the struggle to prove the return on investment for all training related programs he wants to implement. He further pointed out the reluctance of supervisors to allow employees to attend training sessions.

Should trainers be dealing with workforce literacy? Does the training of an aging workforce hamper the implementation of new technologies? Are record profits being funneled back into the training programs to continue to boost quality and productivity? A number of trainers in Hampton Roads are facing these issues on a daily basis.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The problem of this study was to determine categories of training problems being faced by Hampton Roads, Virginia, business and industry trainers.

## **RESEARCH GOALS**

To answer this problem, the following goals were developed:

1. Will workforce literacy hamper updating the current employment culture with new technology?
2. Are trainers quantifying costs to determine return on investment?
3. Will companies benefit from using in-house trainers or out source this training to vendors?
4. Does management share the same visionary outlook as trainers do, that by implementing new technologies, the overall training process will be enhanced?
5. Can projections be made of assistance to elevate challenges faced by industry and business trainers?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Training issues and concerns are by no means new to our workforce culture. Labor leader Samuel Gompers, during a speech to the National Education Association in 1916, acknowledged Labor's commitment to lifelong learning when he stated, "education must continue throughout life if the individual is to really live and make progress" (Hensley, 1994, p. 2). Gompers realized that union workers continuously needed training to improve basic skills and to stay competitive. Trainers would soon face the workforce literacy problems that Gompers projected to stay competitive with world markets.

Throughout the 1980's to the present, trainers and training managers endured the constant pressures of downsizing, mergers, high-turnover, aging workforce, and reduced training budgets. The biggest problem training managers faced in a growing company was that often they were a one or two person management operation, and, while "the sprite is willing, the flesh is weak" when it comes to attending to the details of paperwork or data entry that accountability demanded (Nilson, 1992, p. 60). Nilson discovered that many training managers doubled as trainers in small to mid-size companies. The trainers primary concern was in the development and delivery of instruction and not the time consuming stresses of administration. However, how effective are trainers if the learners (employees) lack the basic skills to comprehend the training? Are companies correcting this problem? According to Horrigan, less than three percent of all establishments offered formal training in basic reading, writing, arithmetic and English language skills, although 19 percent of large establishments offered such training (1993, p. 2).

Despite the advertised educated workforce in Virginia, Governor Gilmore in 1998 introduced major workforce development legislation to provide workforce-training programs.

This legislation was to ensure Virginia's quality workforce remains prepared to meet the employment challenges of the twenty-first century (Workforce Investment Act of 1998, p. 1).

Will the workforce culture of Hampton Roads meet the demands of the future? Without the support of management in local, state, and private agencies, the economic successes of industry and business in Hampton Roads will gradually suffer. According to Al Thomas, Training Specialist for Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Newport News, Virginia, "if management continues to ignore the basic work skills issues because of political correctness, then our transition into the twenty-first century will be covered with consequences"(personal communication, May 16, 1999).

## **LIMITATIONS**

The limitations of the study were as follow:

1. The research was limited to interviewing Hampton Roads area trainers.
2. The research was limited to trainers who held at least an assistant to the director of training position.
3. The research was limited to companies whose workforce exceeded 300 employees.
4. The research was limited to training problems and solutions for industry and business.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

The assumptions of this research were as follows:

1. All trainers interviewed hold the required credentials for their positions in training and development.
2. There is documented evidence of a workforce literacy problem.
3. Industry and business trainers encounter conflicts with department heads and trainees.

4. Regardless of size, not all companies provide formal training.
5. Training can produce increased productivity for companies.
6. Few companies maintain data on the cost returns provided through training.

## **PROCEDURES**

A survey was devised listing questions to aid in the facilitation of the research. The survey was an important part of the research process. It was important to maintain a structured interview ensuring each participant an equal platform to respond. Each participant agreed to a follow-up interview to discuss the research findings. In addition, all participants agreed to the use of their comments and quotes in the research.

## **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

The following terms were defined in order for the reader to better understand and not misinterpret the research material:

**CALL CENTER SUPERVISOR** – Responsible for the overall performance of Tele-marketer operators.

**COMPUTER BASED TRAINING** – A method of interactive computer software that trains an employee one on one.

**FUNCTIONAL MYOPIA** - An employee who functions near sighted, not looking at the benefits of change.

**HUMAN SOFTWARE**- An employee's ability to problem solve and think out solutions.

**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998** - Governor Gilmore's State of Virginia

Strategic Five-Year Plan for economic development.

**WORKPLACE LITERACY**- Literacy that is tied to workplace knowledge. It involves communication, problem solving, and how to learn skills (Lewis, 1995, p. 1).

## **OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER 1**

Chapter I identifies categories of problems that affect Hampton Roads Area trainers.

CHAPTER II covers what experts in the field of training are saying about the categories of training problems in this research. Chapter III outlines methods and procedures used to collect the data for this research. Chapter IV reports the findings on the data collected. Finally, Chapter V provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The purpose of this study was to determine categories of training problems being experience by Hampton Roads, Virginia, business and industry trainers. A review of literature found that five main categories of problems affected business and industry trainers. This study attempts to define the problems and analyze their affects as barriers as they relate to trainer's abilities to improve the workforce culture. In Chapter II a literature review of the following categories is found. These include Workforce Literacy, Quantifying Training Cost, Outsource Training, Implementing New Technology, and Elevating Challenges.

### **WORKFORCE LITERACY**

Errors, defective work, poor productivity, quality, and erosion of consumer confidence in local and nationally produced products and services can be the by-product of "workforce illiteracy". More and more Americans lack the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills necessary to function at an acceptable level in the work place. Since many workers are uneducated or undereducated, their ability to produce competitively priced, quality products is greatly diminished (Moore, 1992, p. 1). With the available resources of this country, it is hard to accept that trainers are encountering this problem with today's workforce.

In Chapter I, this research reported that one in four adults held a college degree in the Commonwealth of Virginia (1998). Will this 25 percent educated workforce meet the requirement trainer's need in sustaining the skills required for Hampton Roads industry and business?

An evaluation of the workforce literacy issue shows different groups and agencies were reviewing, estimating, and defining its impact on training in business and industry. The American Society of Training and Development proposed that workers needed communication skills, decision-making capabilities, and internal motivations as well as strong basic skills to be effective (as cited in Hensley, 1994, p. 3). Hensley reported that in 1989, 27 million American adults were functionally illiterate and 45 million adults were marginally literate. With all the reported data in the late 80s, companies contended that they did not have the expertise or funds for offering such courses for improving basic skills and that most firms did not see the basic skills crisis as their problem yet (Labor Notes, 1989, p. A1).

Claudia Cohn confirmed that there was a growing concern amongst established training consultants in the Hampton Roads and Richmond, Virginia, regions on the issues of workforce literacy. Cohn is responsible for Industrial Procurement and Training at Supervisor of Shipbuilding Newport News, Virginia. She attended the 1998-1999 Women's Executive Leadership Program (Core II Training) held in Richmond, Virginia. Cohn explained that in many of the comprehensive training sessions, training associates were looking at ways to improve employee's literacy skills without embarrassing or offending them. Cohn further stated that "several training consultants I work closely with have mentioned the challenges of overcoming workforce literacy in the Hampton Roads area" (personal interview, May 28, 1999).

Can Hampton Roads trainers solely rely on educational technology to close the literacy gap? Boyett and Conn explain that in education, as in business, Americans in the 1980s became fascinated with technology and looked to it to solve all of their problems.



Technology was not the ultimate solution in business and it was not and would not be in education (Boyett and Conn, 1991, p. 285). The Southeastern Chapter of the American Society of Development and Training, located in Hampton, Virginia, provides monthly low-cost training programs for trainers and facilitators. According to Bill Garry, Vice President of the Training Institute, "discussions of training problems are always talked about. The literacy issue is real" (telephone conversation, June 2, 1999).

Hampton Roads is home to over 30,000 Department of the Navy civilian employees. Claud Divers, Assistant Training Director at Human Resources East in Norfolk, Virginia, is responsible for the design and implementation of 200 training programs. Divers confirmed workforce literacy issues within his skilled mechanics in the region. "A program was designed to improve our mechanics basic computer skills using an outsource vendor. The vendor complained that due to a lack of fundamental reading skills, the program could not be fully utilized". Divers set up a basic reading skill clinic on a volunteer basis for the mechanics. Of the 200 invitations, not one mechanic showed up (telephone conversation, May 20, 1999).

According to Moore (1992), the illiterate employee becomes a prisoner at work, locked in by an inability to read or by some other disability. Industry and business in Hampton Roads must overcome many obstacles to implement training; only when the obstacles are removed will the literacy of the trainee be improved.

## QUANTIFYING TRAINING COST

In 1989, a study by the Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency reported that employers invested only 10 percent of their total payroll in formal training courses. Though this \$30 billion investment seems formidable, it represents only \$278 per employee and is spread unevenly among employee classifications (Hensley, 1994, p. 3).

Funding the training process is yet another challenge faced by Hampton Roads industry and business trainers. Companies fighting for profitability find cuts in the training budget an easy sacrifice. Hooch (1999) confirms that trainers he communicates with in Norfolk and Virginia Beach have little background or education in dealing with quantifying training cost to top management. According to Hooch, he is often questioned on the benefits of seminars he proposes to improve the call center representatives. "The boss always counters my proposals with employees never remember what they learn".

The retention of training information is always a concern when developing a training package, but defending the package is even tougher when retention is used as a tool to cut funding. Some studies show that retention levels from a formal seminar fall to as low as 20 percent, three weeks after training. If you translated this 20 percent retention to an actual training program, the figures might look like this-training cost for one day equal \$2,000. If only 20 percent of the content is actually used back on the job, it would take five times as long to achieve complete retention (Johnson and Carnes, 1996, p. 3). What organizations are willing or able to spend five times the original cost of training?

According to Jim Lang, Instructional Designer for Ferguson Enterprises Inc., Newport News, Virginia, "it is a struggle to prove the cost benefit of computer based training which we use for some 3,000 employees". Ferguson Enterprises has a training staff of 18 employees independent of the Human Resource Department. In February 1999, Lang attended a meeting sponsored by the Southeastern Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development. The meeting was on calculating the value of training given by Dr. Lamkin, Corporate Training Director for Landmark Communications. One of Lamkin's recommendations was to encourage individuals who benefited from the training to return that information to management. She calls this process "return word of mouth" (telephone conversation, July 8, 1999). This concept can be an effective weapon in quantifying training cost. Positive feedback to management could be a constant reminder of the value of training and deter the attitude that training is a liability to the bottom line.

Nilson wrote, "when times are good, training is an important contributor to employees well-being and to profit. When times are not so good, training should be an important contributor to making them better" (Nilson, 1992, p. 64). Managers view education and training cost as soft cost expenditures. They simply do not see the long-range advantages to training their employees.

A 1993 report by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) found that most companies do not offer any training at all. Just 15,000 employers, a mere 0.5 percent of the total, accounted for 90 percent of the \$30 billion spent on training annually. The study further revealed that 75 percent of the workforce did not hold a

college degree and most companies spent training dollars on managers (Toblin, 1993, p. 14).

According to Barbara Haga, Training Director for Human Resource East, Norfolk, Virginia, "In order to quantify training cost, a trainer must become an expert in changing managers attitudes towards training". Haga's training budget is consistently targeted for cut backs due to the Department of the Navy's force reduction plan (personal interview, June 1, 1999). Training departments focus on gaining visibility for instruction, but lack the necessary planning, budgeting, and auditing skills to justify their existence (Nilson, 1992, p. 60).

Types of training can be difficult to quantify. Trainers who continue to push traditional training methods find a tough sell quantifying them. The lack of control by the employee, who knows what information is needed to improve performance, causes traditional training to become ineffective. Besides low retention, high costs, and time off the job, traditional training methods can create a drop in productivity (Richter, 1999, p. 1).

Overall the trainers interviewed in this research feel that they could help their companies achieve their business objectives if given the chance. According to Al Thomas (1999), "a lack of available resources will continue to erode our ability to perform". Trainers are frequently hard pressed to quantify the cost of the unattained benefit. Without agreement between managers and trainers on the value of training's impact on productivity, and profit, trainers will never be able to claim their legitimate contributions to the company's financial health.

## OUTSOURCE TRAINING

When faced with the decision to shift to an outside vendor, the evaluation or selection process the trainer uses must take into consideration the quality and price of the product. Based on personal communications with several Hampton Roads trainers and training directors, outsource vendors are never selected sight unseen. Experts recommend that the evaluation of vendors include, first, getting the vendor to offer a pilot course. Next, ensure that you negotiate into the package that lessons learned early in the program will be changed at no additional cost (Casner and Lotto, 1988, p. 49).

According to Barbara Haga (1999), she was instructed to reduce her training staff by 30 percent. Her decision was to reassign her trainers to other government positions and keep her curriculum design staff. With the remaining staff, she sub-grouped them into three teams in which each group was responsible for developing guidelines for vendors to follow in implementing over 200 courses. Her next step was to select vendors through a review and bidding process utilizing an Internet home page. The successful transfer to vendors was credited to the curriculum design teams evaluation of the vendors training, backgrounds, and close monitoring of the purchased products.

Al Thomas (1999) was tasked with converting an office staff of 334 to Windows 98. He selected three CD-ROM packages provided by vendors for review. He facilitated volunteers to use the different programs and selected the package that the workers felt most users friendly. Utilizing a computer lab and with the assistance of a vendor representative, he successfully implemented Windows 98 over a three month period.

Maricopa Community College in Tempe, Arizona, Center of Learning and Instruction (MCLI), reports that the development of training workshops is expensive. For

example, it may easily take 280 hours to develop a seven-hour workshop (Levine, 1994, p. 2). The utilization of vendors can be an excellent tool for small training staffs to save time and money if properly administered.

## **IMPLEMENTING NEW TECHNOLOGY**

According to David Merrill, professor of instructional technology at Utah State University, and pioneer in the development of computer-based training, "new technologies are like a roller coaster. We are now at the top of the Internet hump, the biggest of all. But does all of this technology drama translate into knowledge about how best to design or conduct effective training" (Johnson, 1999, p. 30)? With new technologies being utilized daily in the modern workplace, can trainers assume that the entry-level employee is prepared to use the technology?

Rutledge (1999) conducts training for over 300 sales and customer service Tele-marketers. She is often surprised that only a few graduates of college and high schools have little or poor knowledge of Windows 95 and 98. The Windows software is the main program used at Cendant Company. Before Rutledge can train new tele-marketers on required job skills, she must first teach them on the use of Windows.

McKlasky (1999) stated that his number one drawback to implementing new computer based hardware for the Department of Defense civilian employees in Hampton Roads is computer illiterate managers who approve the purchases of the products. "The Department of Defense has a long way to go in catching up with the private sector in using computer based technology". McKlasky further explains that cost factors for the

hardware to support the software packages has slowed transition due to reduced training budgets.

## **ELEVATING CHALLENGES**

A successful approach to elevating challenges for Hampton Roads trainers is to incorporate employees throughout the company to assist in the training process. With limited training staffs, or often-single person training departments, this concept could pay dividends. Managers, supervisors, and skilled workers could add experience and expertise to the overall training platform. Trainers might also find support from the local community. The City of Virginia Beach has established a partnership with local schools, military, and business. According to Debbie Gentry, the city's aim is to improve the overall quality of life in Virginia Beach. The program is called the Virginia Beach Quality Alliance. One of their goals is to provide small businesses, with no training departments in Virginia Beach, free or low-cost Total Quality Management Training (TQM). The Alliance is looking at the planned Virginia Beach Advanced Technical Learning Center as a possible site to conduct this training (telephone conversation, July 8, 1999). Diversification in the training process can improve the overall quality of the curriculum and possibly reduce the demand on the trainers.

Marita Rutledge (1999) agrees that bringing in top performers, managers and supervisors in the company could add value to the training workshops and is something she is taking a look at. Tracy Powell of Preview Systems invites company programmers to make guest appearances. "It's much cheaper to have a programmer come in for 45 minutes and explain the specifics than to hire a technical trainer to come in, get up to

speed on our products, and teach” (as cited in Kiser, 1999). Recruiting workers from outside the training office could help in gaining support for future budget proposals.

Trainers are also encouraged to bring a learning attitude to their company. Toblin wrote, “creating a learning organization is the way to move successfully from the old world to the new, from age-old business practices to a new set of procedures that will enable your company to thrive in the coming century” (Toblin, 1993 p. 12). Having a learning atmosphere may offer more opportunity to train. Rutledge (1999) has six days to train entry-level employees the knowledge required to work as tele-marketers. Of the six days, the Human Resource Department uses one.

How can Hampton Roads trainers prepare for the challenges and resistance to learning most training departments face? According to Gordon Shea, President of Prime Systems Company, “older employees resist learning some things, as most older employees are quite interested in learning others. But most older employees are quite interested in learning “new tricks” if they see a gain and if the required effort toward new mastery does not exceed what they are willing to invest” (Shea, 1991 p. 85).

Trainers can learn from duplicating successful programs that are similar to their company’s structure. Thomas Peters, in his book “In Search of Excellence”, found that the General Electric Company excelled at customer satisfaction, quality of product, and training of employees. According to General Electric CEO Jack Welch, “change has no constituency. People like the status quo. They like the way it was. When you start changing things, the good old days look better and better. You’ve got to be prepared for massive resistance” (Toblin 1993, p. 13).



## **SUMMARY**

Business and industry trainers in Hampton Roads, Virginia, face a difficult task in overcoming the categories of training problems identified by the research. The awareness of the problems is the first step in discovering solutions. The focus of the current study was to limit the research to Hampton Roads trainers with literature support from a varied group of experts. Chapter III contains the Methods and Procedures used to collect the research data for this study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

This study was designed to determine categories of problems being experienced by Hampton Roads, Virginia, trainers. Chapter III will show the methods and procedures used to determine the above categories.

#### **POPULATION**

The population for this study was comprised of trainers in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area. There were ten participants interviewed for this research study. Due to cost and time constraints, and to insure that varieties of trainers were sampled, a random sample was used. Each of the participants provided training for at least 300 employees in the area of industry and business. The ten participants were selected from a list of twenty trainers generated from the researchers industry and business contacts, referrals and the support of the Department of the Defense Human Resource Office, Newport News, Virginia. This list of twenty trainers represent the primary employment sectors in the Hampton Roads region. The structure of the Hampton Roads employment sector is shown on Table 2. Trainers selected for this research were from the following sectors: four from government, two from service, three from manufacturing and one from a small business.

#### **INSTRUMENT DESIGN**

A questionnaire was designed that consisted of a list of interview questions. The questions provided an open form approach for the interview process. The questions

queried the participants for their categories of problems based on the goals of this research.

**TABLE 2**  
**EMPLOYMENT SECTORS INFORMATION**  
**HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA**  
SEPTEMBER 1999

SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	EMPLOYEES	PERCENT %
<b>SERVICES</b>	207,536	29.9
<b>TRADE</b>	161,031	23.2
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	147,843	21.3
<b>MANUFACTURING</b>	72,186	10.4
<b>CONSTRUCTION</b>	40,258	5.8
<b>FINANCE / REAL ESTATE</b>	34,010	4.9
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	31,929	4.6

**Hampton Roads Virginia, Chamber of Commerce**

Statistical Digest, September 1999

See Appendix A for the interview instrument.

The research goals were used to determine the categories of problems being faced by Hampton Roads business and industry trainers. The categories were Workforce Literacy, Quantifying Training Cost, Outsource Training, Implementing New Technology, and Elevating Challenges.

## **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The interviews took place during a three-week period from May to June 1999.

The researcher interviewed the first ten trainers who were contacted and agreed to participate. The data collected was summarized and repeated back to the participants to ensure proper understanding and accurate recording of the information. The second round of interviews was set for September 1999. This round tasked the ten participants to evaluate the five categories of problems identified using a Likert scale survey. See Appendix B and C for the survey used in the second round of this study.

## **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The frequency and number of responses were tabulated to show the priority of importance each participant viewed on the categories of training problems stated in the research goals. This information will be evaluated using a Likert scale and calculating a mean.

## **SUMMARY**

By randomly sampling the population, a variety of experiences and backgrounds were surveyed. The participants surveyed were considered training experts in the field of business and industry training. The results of this research will be analyzed in Chapter IV.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

The findings presented in this chapter are the results of personal interviews conducted from a random sample of Hampton Roads, Virginia, trainers. The interviews were followed up by the participants rating a survey of the findings using a five point Likert scale. The results of the interviews are an accumulation of experiences and perceptions reported by the participants. The follow-up survey will reflect the importance each participant places on the reported categories of problems.

Ten interviews were conducted resulting in the five categories of problems reported. Ten follow-up surveys based upon a Likert scale were e-mailed to the initial interviewees and were returned. Using the interview sheet, Appendix A, the interviewer asked the following question to the participants. "In accomplishing your training goals and objectives, as a trainer or training director at your company in Hampton Roads, Virginia, what types of problems or challenges do you face? The responses to this question are reflected in the following narrative.

Participant one discussed her background briefly before addressing the question posed. She was a trainer in the Airforce for 12 years before obtaining her Bachelor's degree in Human Resource Development. Upon entering the private sector, she became concerned over the quality of employees attending workshops and training seminars. The reading, writing, and application of (Microsoft programs) were disappointing. Her company also lacked a structured curriculum that she felt important in meeting any number of training goals. Participant one said without a doubt, that her biggest challenge was overcoming the shortfalls in the employee's basic skills.

Participant two immediately found the research question interesting. He wasted little small talk and spoke in some detail of the difficulty in updating employees to new technology being introduced. He also mentioned that management has to take some blame when requirements in training are often overlooked due to cost. The decision-makers have limited knowledge of computer training capabilities and display minimal appreciation for Computer Based Training (CBT). The purchasing of new equipment for Department of Defense employees have suffered from a continuous decline in the military budget. Again, he spoke mainly of (CBT) equipment. The interviewer probed for additional problems in training but the participant's main concern was the implementation of (CBT).

Participant three said that his training budget was too restrictive. His major problem areas are quantifying training cost, overcoming a lack of resources, and in many occasions, wearing two hats as administrator and trainer. He understood why many supervisors were not willing to allow their employees time to attend training workshops, but he was confident that training would improve productivity and performance. Participant three stated that if he could do a better job of calculating training cost, his efforts in getting support from supervisors and management would improve.

Participant four commented that he was a trainer from the old school. He enjoyed using the overhead projector with slides and mixing in a few video-training clips. In his twenty years of training he's noticed a decline in employee's problem solving and writing skills. His efforts to address the problem stop at upper management. He is sure that management is afraid to offend any employee and raise issues with union representatives. He also sees a growing reluctance from older employees learning the skills required with

incorporating new technology in the work place. He also mentioned that his training budget was workable but submitting for large increases were often denied.

Participant five felt that her current challenge was improving employee's computer skills and increasing the company's use of training vendors. She explained in the interview that she often attends workshops and seminars to keep abreast of changes in training, new technology, and new products on the market. Participant five definitely left a lasting impression on the researcher due to her pro-active style of accomplishing her training goals. Participant five would like to see college students take more classes on basic computer software for business application.

Participant six said that his obstacle in training is upper management. The main issues were the size of the training budget and the amount of time employees spent away from their positions to attend training. He continuously looks for ways to save money and he felt that using training vendors could help his budget goals. Vendors are playing an important role providing specialty training according to participant six. His two needs in the past quarter were implementing a new Intranet system and conducting diversity training. His company spent \$25,000 to have the C.W. Hines Consultant Firm, Newport News, Virginia, to give the diversity training. Participant six said he normally submits small budget increases, but drops hints about how new training equipment could increase the effectiveness of the employees and hopes that upper management will provide the additional funding.

Participant seven explained that being a director of training, she focuses more on the administrative issues rather than face to face training issues. Her job was 70% office and when she could, she would facilitate a workshop. Her main problem was quantifying

her training budget, which she submitted quarterly. Her barrier she felt was upper management's support of the training department. She does not feel like the department gets the same respect as other departments who deal directly with the customers. She concluded in the interview that her plans to add interactive video to the training curriculum would take time due to the cost of the equipment and wiliness by management to invest the required funding.

Participant eight said that his first challenge was working with an undersized staff. His department often works ten to twelve hour days preparing lesson plans and handout materials. He felt that his efforts were not appreciated, because if they were, management would increase his staff size. The interviewer asked besides the issues with your staffing size, were there any other concerns in meeting training objectives? He said he was concerned about the reading levels of new employees based on entry exams the company required and the challenge of training an aging workforce protected by the union.

Participant nine was extremely cooperative and interested in the research project. Considering that the interview was conducted on the telephone, the participant offered the interviewer an opportunity to tour his training department and get a first hand look at the authoring software being used. The participant said that his company spends a lot of money on Computer Based Training (CBT), but he always finds it a hard sale to quantify the cost. To save money, his department often produces its own materials instead of contracting out the work adding to the workload. Participant nine is concerned that too much technology at some point in the future will overload employees abilities to keep up with the learning demand.



Participant ten said she was involved in many projects that could possibly help businesses with limited training resources. Her experience with the local workforce led her to conclude that a vast majority of employees were lacking in competencies needed of workers today. Her opinion was that we have a growing workforce of illiterate employees. The cause she explains could be many reasons, but for the trainers it is real. The participant felt that many issues could be discussed about training and the workforce in Hampton Roads, but the main focus should be put on employee development.

## **RESPONSES TO SURVEY**

The following data represents the findings to the five questions in the second survey. Exactly 10 surveys were submitted via e-mail and 10 returned. The return rate of 100% increases the study's reliability. The following are the results for each question using a five point Likert scale.

Question one, workforce illiteracy hampers updating the current workforce with new technology. The mean results of 4.2 reflects that the majority of trainers agree with this problem. Question two states that trainers are quantifying cost to determine return on training investment. The mean response of 3.3 is neither agree or disagree. Not all trainers are doing an affective job at quantifying training cost. Question three states that companies benefit from using in-house trainers rather than hiring out source vendors to conduct training to the workforce. The mean response of 3.5 shows neither agree or disagree. Trainers are using some out source vendors to do part or all of the training. Question four was a visioning question related to the cooperation of management and trainers. It states, does management share the same visionary outlook toward training as trainers do. By implementing new technologies, the overall training process will be

enhanced? The mean response of 3.1 reflects neither agreement nor disagreement. These findings were less than favorable related to the cooperation between management and trainers. Question five asked, do trainers in Hampton Roads have assistance and support from private and government sectors to elevate challenges being faced by industry and business trainers. The mean response to question five was 3.6 which showed that some trainers agreed that there was assistance and support for training from the private and government sectors. These data were illustrated in Table 3.

**TABLE 3**  
**LIKERT SCALE RESULTS FOR**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONS 1-5**

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>MEAN</b>
1. Workforce illiteracy hampers updating the current workforce with new technology.	4.2
2. Trainers are quantifying cost to determine return on training investment.	3.3
3. Companies benefit from using in-house trainers rather than hiring out source vendors to conduct training to the workforce.	3.5
4. Does management share the same visionary outlook as trainers do, that by implementing new technology the overall training process will be enhanced?	3.1
5. Trainers in Hampton Roads have assistance and support from the private and government sector to elevate challenges being faced by industry and business trainers.	3.6

A numerical value was given to each response. 5 (SA), 4 (A), 3 (N), 2 (DA), 1 (SDA)

### **SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the findings of industry and business experts responses to interviews and survey questions. The results of the interviews were structured into a

narrative format. The survey questions revealed the importance and perception each training expert placed on the questions related to the research problem. Workforce illiteracy was the number one problem found in the findings. Management's lack of support to share a visionary outlook with trainers was also a concern. Other issues were also revealed from trainers in the Hampton Roads area. Chapter V will discuss the summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the research.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter will provide a summary review of the research study covered in chapters I through IV and provide the researchers conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the research.

#### **SUMMARY**

The problem of this study was to determine categories of training problems being faced by Hampton Roads, Virginia, business and industry trainers. This was accomplished by conducting personnel and telephone interviews with business and industry trainers to determine their perceptions of issues and problems in implementing training in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

To answer this problem the following goals were developed: 1) Will workforce literacy hamper updating the current employment culture with new technology? 2) Are trainers quantifying cost to determine return on investments? 3) Will companies benefit from using in-house trainers or outsource this training to vendors? 4) Does management share the same visionary outlook as trainers do, that by implementing new technology, the overall training process will be enhanced? And 5) Can projections be made of assistance to elevate challenges faced by industry and business trainers?

The limiting factors of this study were that 1) the research was limited to interviewing Hampton Roads area trainers, 2) the research was limited to trainers who held at least an assistant to the director of training position, 3) the research was limited to companies whose workforce exceeded 300 employees, and 4) the research was limited to training problems and solutions for industry and business. Six assumptions were made

during this research project. The first assumption was that all trainers interviewed hold the required credentials for their positions in training and development. The second assumption was that there is documented evidence of a workforce literacy problem. The third assumption was that industry and business trainers encounter conflicts with department heads of training. The fourth assumption was that regardless of size, not all companies provide formal training for their employees. The fifth assumption was that training can produce increased productivity for companies. The final and sixth assumption was that few companies maintain data on the cost returns provided through training.

Data were collected from ten trainers in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, region. Two of the trainers interviewed worked in the growing services sector. Four of the trainers worked for or with the Department of Defense civilian and military population. Three trainers worked in the manufacturing sector. One trainer worked exclusively within the community supporting small businesses which lacked the resources for a training department. These professionals were interviewed regarding their perceptions of problems being faced by industry and business trainers in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions were made based upon the studies research goals. The first goal was to determine if workforce illiteracy hampers updating the current employment culture with new technology. The literature review and interviews revealed that errors, defective work, poor productivity, quality, and erosion of consumer confidence can be a by-product of “workforce illiteracy”. The researcher concluded

based on the survey mean of 4.2 that “workforce illiteracy” was apparent in the Hampton Roads region. Trainers interviewed mentioned that reading, writing, problem solving, and computer skills were lacking with many of today’s workforce. Three of the trainers in this study attempted to counter this problem by creating basic workforce improvement workshops. To the surprise of the trainers, this initiative was rejected by the majority of employees and received little support from top management. The perception was that management was afraid to offend employees and raise debate with union representatives. The researcher can not conclude that a major problem exists industry wide, but it does point out that “workforce illiteracy” could be a problem within all employment sectors.

The second goal was to determine if trainers were quantifying training costs to determine returns on investments. This was done through research into existing literature about company’s investments in training. Extensive study has been undertaken on the amount of investment companies spend on training in the local area mainly conducted by the State of Virginia and the Southeastern Chapter of the American Society of Training and Development. Training and development journals reflect on the ongoing challenge trainers have in securing funds for training. The results of the interviews found over half of the trainers complained about this problem. The questionnaire determined that there was neither agreement or disagreement, uncertainty, that trainers were not quantifying cost to determine return on training investment based on the 3.3 mean score.

Quantifying training cost has been used against trainers seeking increases in their budgets. Not quantifying training costs takes away the possibility of showing the positive effects on the bottom line of profit. Four of the trainers interviewed reported that they continually defended their budgets, but lacked the knowledge in quantifying their

requests to upper management. According to Nilson (1992), training departments focus on gaining visibility for instruction, but lack the necessary planning, budgeting, and auditing skills to justify their existence. There is a concern by local trainers for quantifying training costs to management. The survey findings, interviews, and literature review support this concern.

The third goal in this study was to ask the question, will companies benefit from using in-house trainers or out source this training to vendors? The findings of this research support that some of the trainers find advantages in using their own staff compared to out-sourced vendors. The mean score of 3.5 reflected this perception. Based on personal communication and advice from consultants in the field, trainers considering the use of vendor should evaluate closely the quality and price of the package being offered. This should include any modifications or changes needed to be at the expense of the vendor. Vendors were a good source in providing up to date changes in technology. The utilization of vendors could be an excellent tool for small training staffs with limited resources or established training department limited by time.

The fourth goal was to determine if management shared the same visionary outlook as trainers do, that by implementing new technology, the overall training process will be enhanced. The researcher determined that management was reluctant in funding new technology for training. The mean score of 3.1 indicates that no positive perception of cooperation with management existed. Trainers interviewed felt handcuffed by tight budgets that did not allow for the costly startup fees associated with new technology. The majority of trainers interviewed shared experiences where they felt that management did not support their efforts.

The fifth goal was to determine if projections could be made of assistance to elevate challenges faced by industry and business trainers. The researcher found that successful companies are learning organizations and strong management support of the training department has a positive impact on the bottom line. The mean score of 3.6 does reflect some positive perceptions of assistance and support available to elevate challenges faced by the trainers surveyed and questioned. The State of Virginia, The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, and local government are all playing an active role in supporting the training effort of the Hampton Roads area.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study sought to determine categories of training problems being faced by Hampton Roads, Virginia, trainers. Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that:

- Training directors and trainers acquire the knowledge and skills required for quantifying training costs and return on investment.
- Trainers need to enhance their education by studying management and organizational development issues to assist in negotiating budgets and training initiatives with management.
- Support for trainers can be found through membership with local affiliates like the ASDT.
- Trainers need to improve their marketing ability in pursuing support for new instructional technology in the workplace.



- Trainers need to become proactive in becoming a part of the companies planning process in order to share the same visions of improved skills related to improved products and services. Training can lead to increased profits.
- Local universities and community colleges could capitalize on partnerships with the growing services and manufacturing industries in tailoring curriculum and programs to meet their needs such as business problem solving, cost analysis, and computer software refresher courses. These courses could be broadcast directly to the companies site using distance learning and minimizing time employees spend away from their job.
- Employees could aim for certificates of completion on business problem solving, cost analysis, and computer skills with possible bonus incentives.

The researcher recommends that a follow-up study be under taken to review problems of quantifying training costs, workplace illiteracy, and implementing new training technologies using a larger sample group which reflects the Hampton Roads employment sector. The Hampton Roads economy continues to shift away from the military support and is growing within the service, and manufacturing industries.

Anchored by the emergence of Gateway Inc., GEICO Insurance, Cannon Virginia, Towers Perrin, Lillian Veron Corporation, and Ford Motor Company, the demand for trainers to increase workers knowledge and skill levels will continue to grow. Further research can evaluate the effectiveness of training in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area.

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**APPENDIX A**

**INTERVIEW SHEET**

## Interview Sheet

Purpose: To determine categories of training problems being faced by Hampton Roads, Virginia, business and industry trainers.

Statement: To establish a guideline that ensures all interviews (in person or telephone conversation) are consistent for the validity of the findings.

Actions:

1. Select participant from the list of twenty trainers generated through the researcher in industry and business contacts. A telephone call was then made.
  2. Introduction. If contact is made, state the referral before introduction.  

" My name is Delbert Gist. I am a graduate student at Old Dominion University working with Dr. Ritz. This interview is part of the research requirement for my Masters degree".
  3. State purpose of interview. (see purpose)
  4. Time allotment, less than twenty minutes.
  5. Agreement with interviewee, confidential or agrees to have name and comments listed in the research document.
- 
-

## Interview Sheet

6. Background of participant.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Staff size \_\_\_\_\_ Company \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of employee's \_\_\_\_\_

Types of training offered:

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7. Document response of participant to the following question. "In accomplishing your training goals and objectives, as a trainer or training director at your company in Hampton Roads, Virginia, what types of problems or challenges do you face?"

Note: do not lead answers

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## Interview Sheet

8. Review information recorded for accuracy with participant.

9. Reconfirm the agreement to confidentiality.

10. Any recommended referrals.

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11. Appreciate your participation in the study.

12. Agreement to a short follow-up survey by e-mail September 1999.

13. Thank again.

Notes:

## **APPENDIX B**

### **RESEARCH SURVEY**



## TRAINING PROBLEMS FACED BY HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA, TRAINERS

### PURPOSE:

**To validate the findings of the research and determine the reliability of the survey.**

### DIRECTIONS:

The following five statements are a summation of the research that depicts problems being faced by Hampton Roads, Virginia trainers. Please take a few minutes to respond to each statement as it relates to your experience as a trainer in Hampton Roads.

### RESPONSE KEY:

(SA) strongly agree, (A) agree, (N) neither agree or disagree, (DA) disagree, (SDA) strongly disagree

### Problem Statements

1. Workforce illiteracy hampers updating the current workforce with new technology.  
(SA)\_\_\_\_\_, (A)\_\_\_\_\_, (N)\_\_\_\_\_, (DA) \_\_\_\_\_, (SDA)\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Trainers are quantifying cost to determine return on training investment.  
(SA)\_\_\_\_\_, (A)\_\_\_\_\_, (N)\_\_\_\_\_, (DA) \_\_\_\_\_, (SDA)\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Companies benefit from using in-house trainers rather than hiring out source vendors to conduct training to the workforce.  
(SA)\_\_\_\_\_, (A)\_\_\_\_\_, (N)\_\_\_\_\_, (DA) \_\_\_\_\_, (SDA)\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Management shares the same visionary outlook as trainers do in regards to new technology, and enhancing the overall training effort.  
(SA)\_\_\_\_\_, (A)\_\_\_\_\_, (N)\_\_\_\_\_, (DA) \_\_\_\_\_, (SDA)\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Trainers in Hampton Roads have assistance and support from the private and government sector to elevate challenges being faced by industry and business trainers.  
(SA)\_\_\_\_\_, (A)\_\_\_\_\_, (N)\_\_\_\_\_, (DA) \_\_\_\_\_, (SDA)\_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you. Please e-mail your response to [delbertg@yahoo.com](mailto:delbertg@yahoo.com) or fax to (757) 380-4477. Attach additional comments as a word document. For questions contact Delbert Gist at 757-380-4129. Thank you for your support.

Delbert W. Gist

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SURVEY COVER LETTER**

Delbert W. Gist  
(w) 757-380-4129  
(f) 757-380-4477  
E-mail - [delbertg@yahoo.com](mailto:delbertg@yahoo.com)  
November 1, 1999

Dear participant, (will address to each)

My name is Delbert Gist. I am a graduate student in the Occupational and Technical Studies Department at Old Dominion University. Currently, I am completing a study to determine categories of training problems being faced by Hampton Roads, Virginia, business and industry trainers. It is important that the study reflect the unique training issues associated with the local workforce. This study should determine current challenges related to planning and implementing training in Hampton Roads.

The information you provided during the research interview process established the foundations of this study. Your inputs developed the statements and goals of this research. I can not complete the study without your assistance. It is important that your response to the attached five-question survey be compared to your original perceptions of problems in Hampton Roads training. November 12, 1999 is the anticipated return date. Please try and return the survey by that date. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Delbert W. Gist  
ODU student